

MARVEL<sup>®</sup>  
COMICS



JUNE  
#9

APPROVED  
BY THE  
COMICS  
CODE  
AUTHORITY

THE NEXT GENERATION  
OF **AVENGERS!**

**A**  
**NEXT**

WHEN THE *SOLDIERS OF  
THE SERPENT* RETURN...

**THUNDERSTRIKE**  
FIGHTS ALONE!



(AT LEAST UNTIL WE  
INTRODUCE THE ALL-  
NEW *SUPERSTAR* WHO  
EVENTUALLY JOINS  
UP WITH HIM.)

DEFALCO

FRENZ

WILLIAMSON



STAN LEE PROUDLY  
PRESENTS THE NEXT  
GENERATION OF  
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST  
HEROES...

**A** NEXT

# TEAM MATTERS

FORTY-EIGHT  
HOURS AGO  
THE NEW  
AVENGERS  
DISCOVERED  
TWO PUZZLING  
DEVICES THAT  
HAD BEEN  
HIDDEN DEEP  
WITHIN THEIR  
MANSION  
COMPLEX--

-- A CRYOGENIC CHAMBER  
CONTAINING THE UNCONSCIOUS  
BODY OF THE SCARLET  
WITCH--

-- AND A MOST  
MYSTERIOUS  
PORTAL!

WE MAY  
HAVE A  
PROBLEM,  
PEOPLE.

WHAT IS IT,  
MAINFRAME?  
WHAT'S  
WRONG?

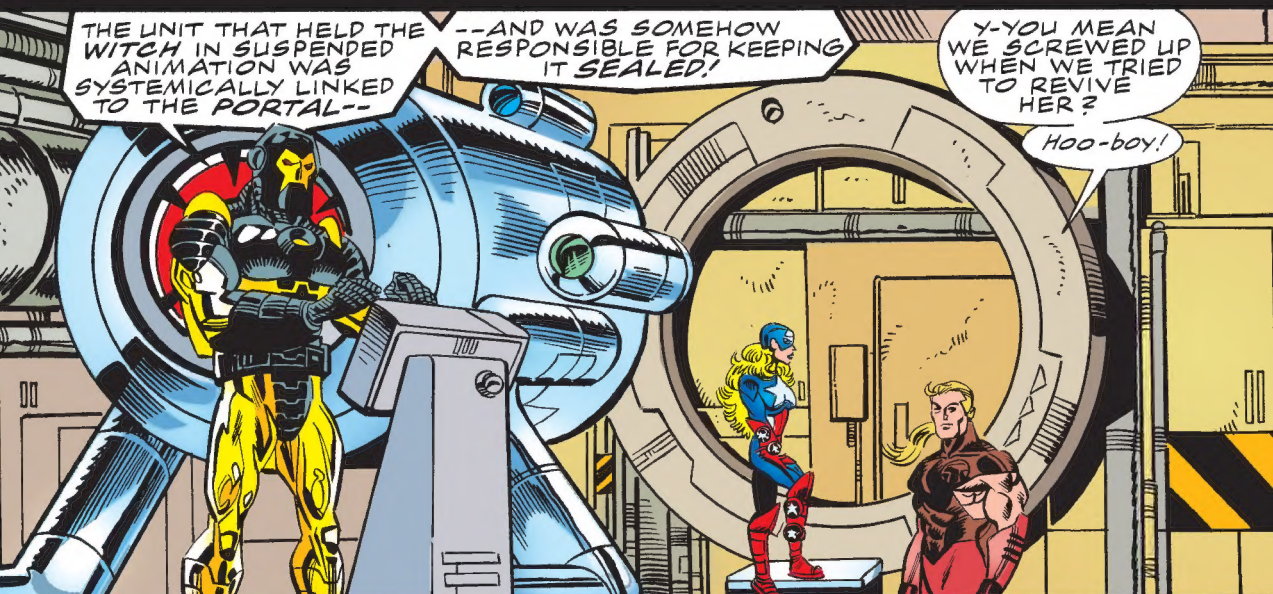
WHILE I AM NO  
CLOSER TO LEARNING  
WHERE THIS PORTAL  
LEADS OR WHY IT  
WAS BUILT--

-- MY PRELIMINARY  
ANALYSIS INDICATES  
THAT IT IS PRESENTLY  
ACTIVE!

IN OUR ZEAL TO FREE  
THE SCARLET WITCH,  
WE MAY HAVE UNIN-  
TENTIONALLY EXPOSED  
THE EARTH TO THE  
THREAT OF AN ALIEN  
INVASION.

TOM DEFALCO & RON FRENZ-- WORDS/PLOT/PENCILS  
AL MILGROM-- FINISHED ART  
BOB SHAREN-- COLOR ARTIST  
JIM NOVAK-- CALLIGRAPHY  
BOB HARRAS-- EDITOR IN CHIEF



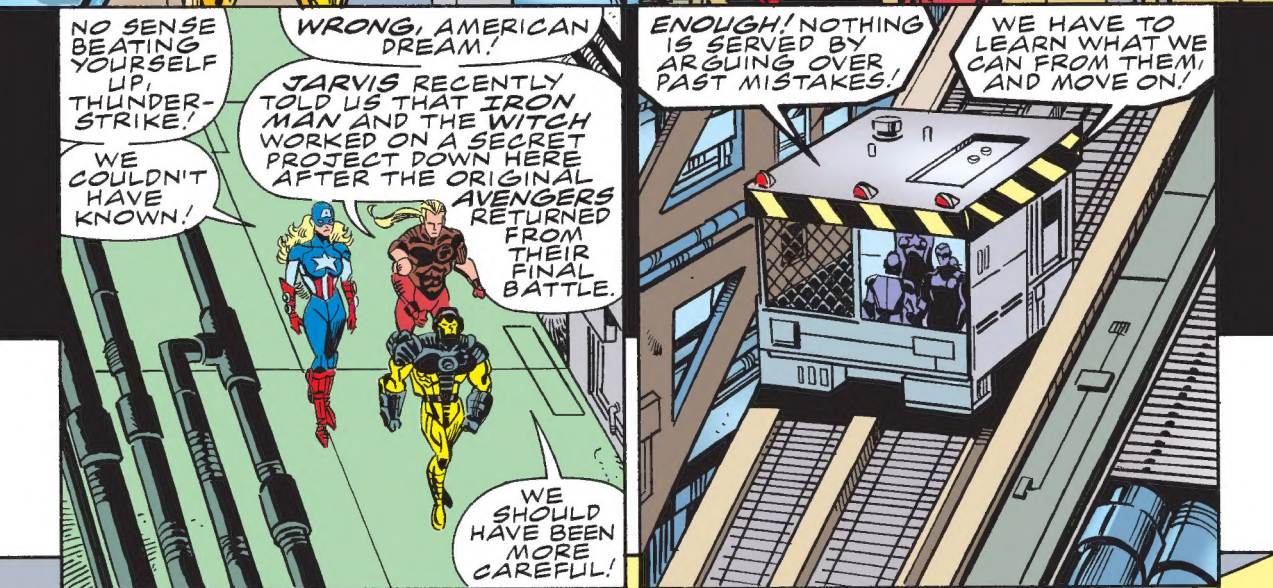


THE UNIT THAT HELD THE WITCH IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION WAS SYSTEMICALLY LINKED TO THE PORTAL--

--AND WAS SOMEHOW RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING IT SEALED!

Y-YOU MEAN WE SCREWED UP WHEN WE TRIED TO REVIVE HER?

Hoo-boy!



NO SENSE BEATING YOURSELF UP, THUNDER-STRIKE!

WRONG, AMERICAN DREAM!

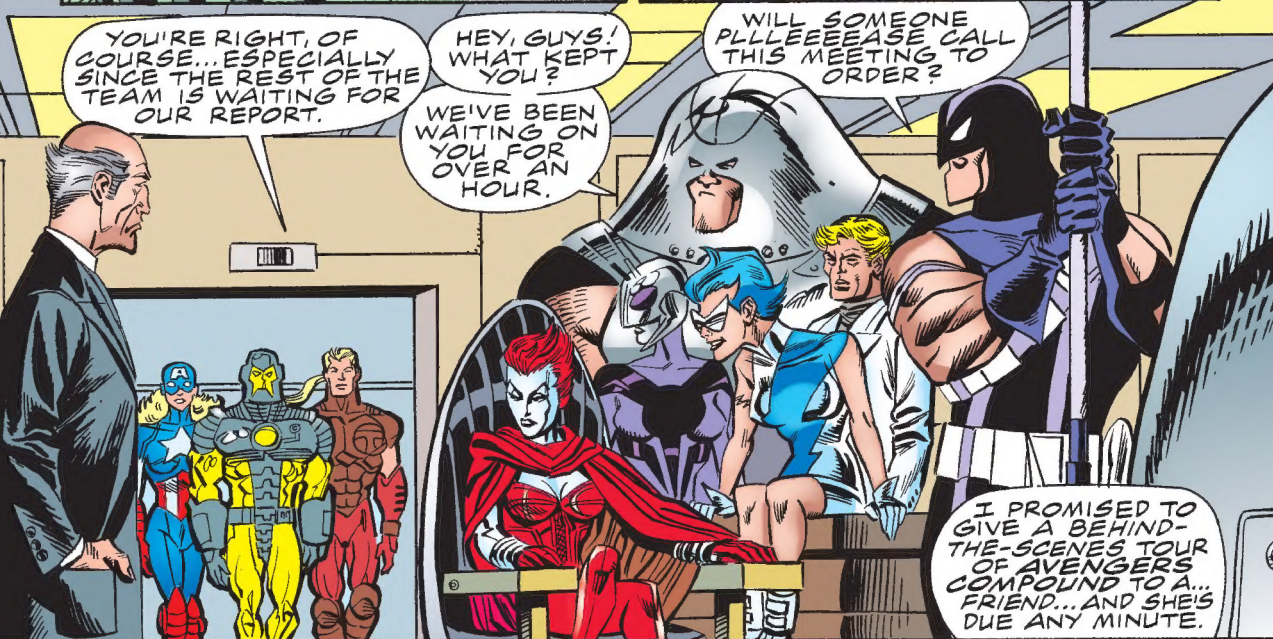
ENOUGH! NOTHING IS SERVED BY ARGUING OVER PAST MISTAKES!

WE HAVE TO LEARN WHAT WE CAN FROM THEM, AND MOVE ON!

WE COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN!

JARVIS RECENTLY TOLD US THAT IRON MAN AND THE WITCH WORKED ON A SECRET PROJECT DOWN HERE AFTER THE ORIGINAL AVENGERS RETURNED FROM THEIR FINAL BATTLE.

WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE CAREFUL!



YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE... ESPECIALLY SINCE THE REST OF THE TEAM IS WAITING FOR OUR REPORT.

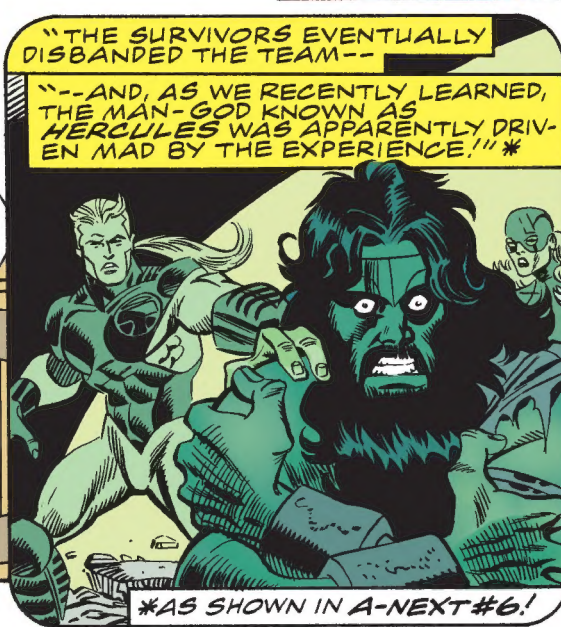
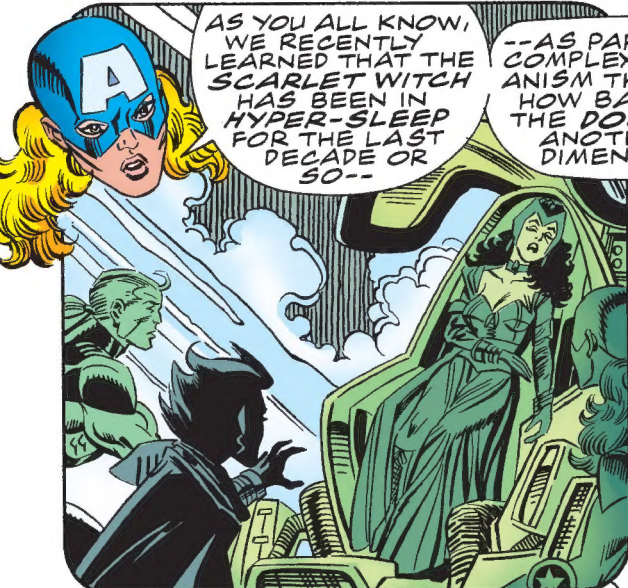
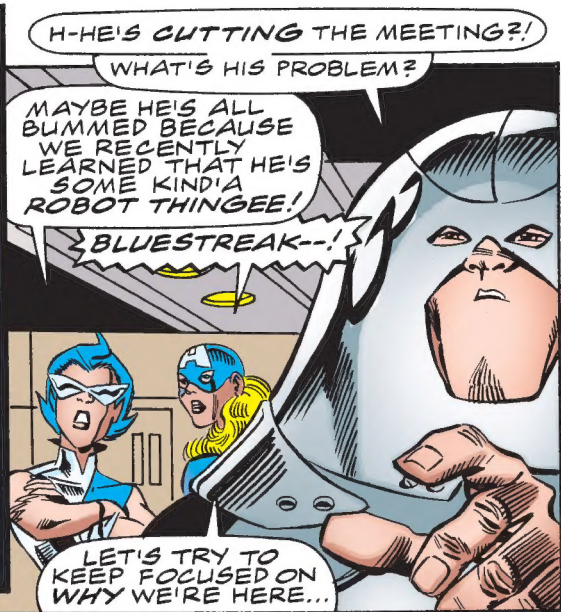
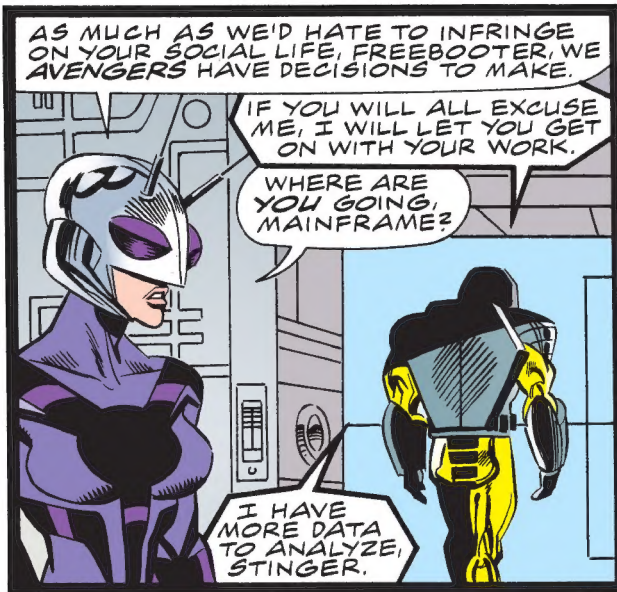
HEY, GUYS! WHAT KEPT YOU?

WILL SOMEONE PLLLLLEEEASE CALL THIS MEETING TO ORDER?

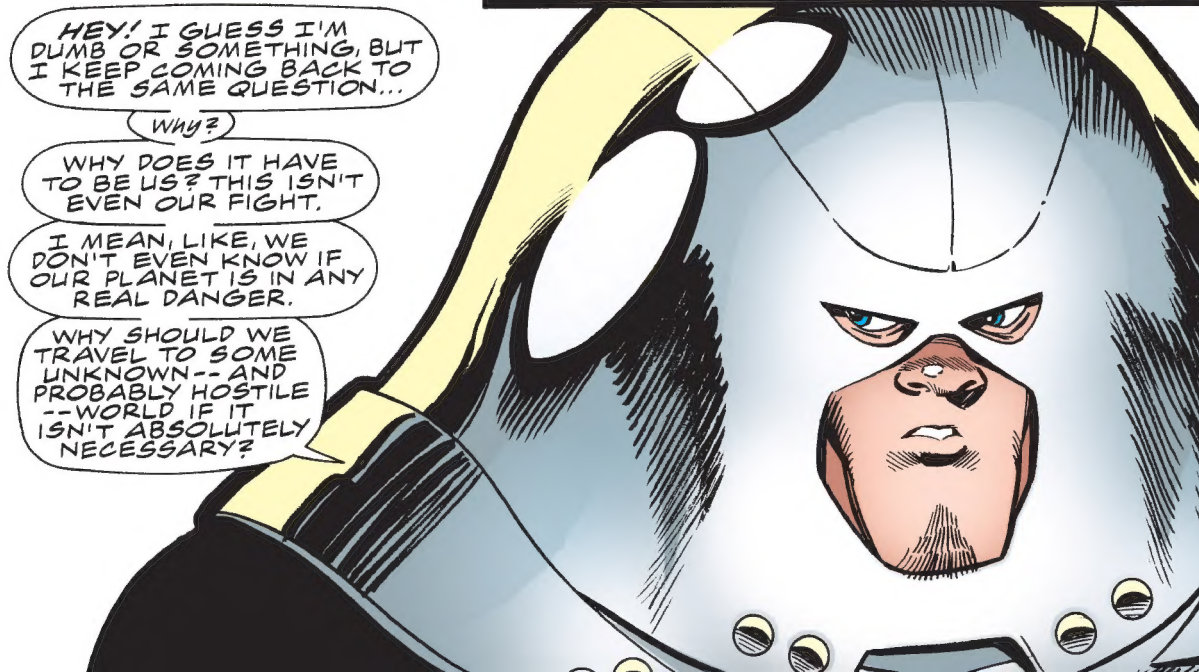
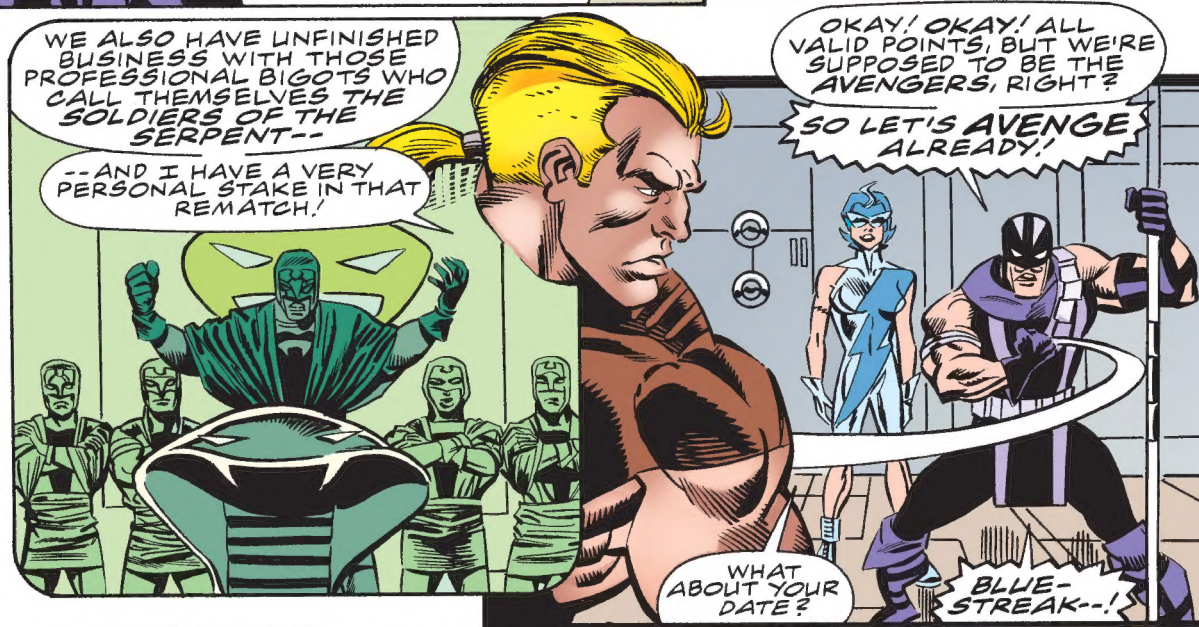
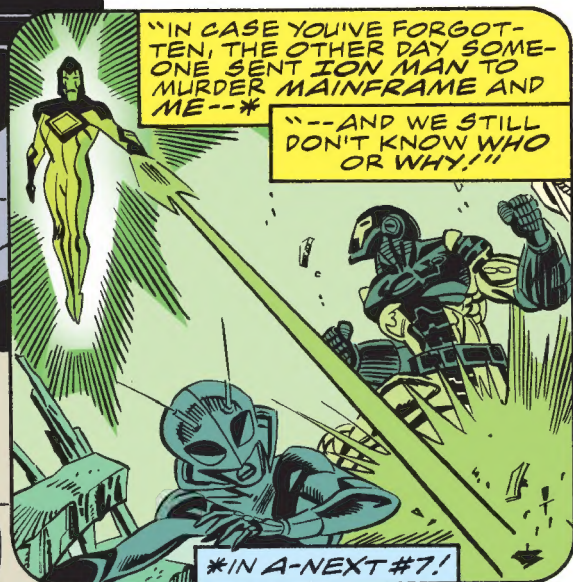
WE'VE BEEN WAITING ON YOU FOR OVER AN HOUR.

I PROMISED TO GIVE A BEHIND-THE-SCENES TOUR OF AVENGERS COMPOUND TO A... FRIEND... AND SHE'S DUE ANY MINUTE.













WHEW!

I THOUGHT THAT MEETING WOULD NEVER END.

I'M GLAD WE DECIDED TO ADJOURN FOR A FEW HOURS BEFORE PUTTING THE MATTER TO A VOTE.

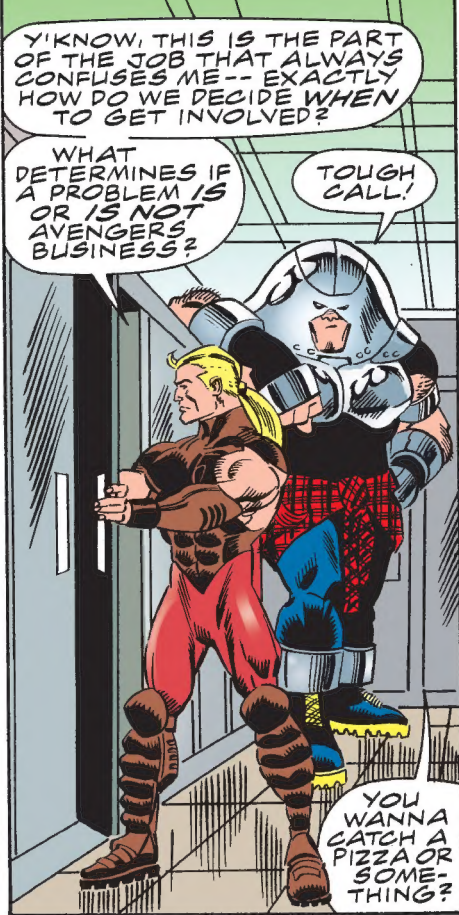


YOU'RE MY BUD, 'STRIKE. TELL ME THE TRUTH! DID MY MOUTHING OFF MAKE ANY SENSE?

YOU DID FINE, JUGS.

LOOK, WHATEVER HAPPENED BEYOND THAT PORTAL WAS REAL TRAGIC FOR THE ORIGINAL AVENGERS, BUT THEY DID SCORE IT AS A WIN.

WHO ARE WE TO SECOND-GUESS THEM?

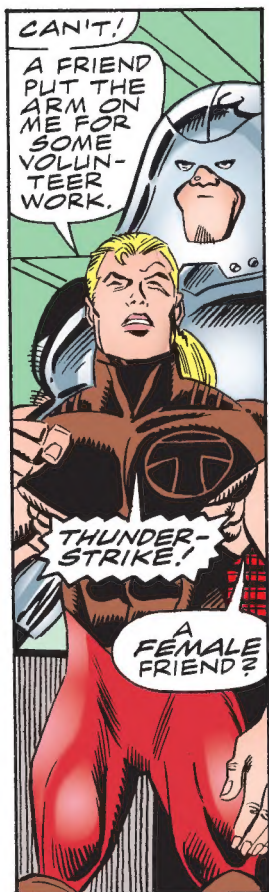


Y'KNOW, THIS IS THE PART OF THE JOB THAT ALWAYS CONFUSES ME-- EXACTLY HOW DO WE DECIDE WHEN TO GET INVOLVED?

WHAT DETERMINES IF A PROBLEM IS OR IS NOT AVENGERS BUSINESS?

TOUGH CALL!

YOU WANNA CATCH A PIZZA OR SOMETHING?

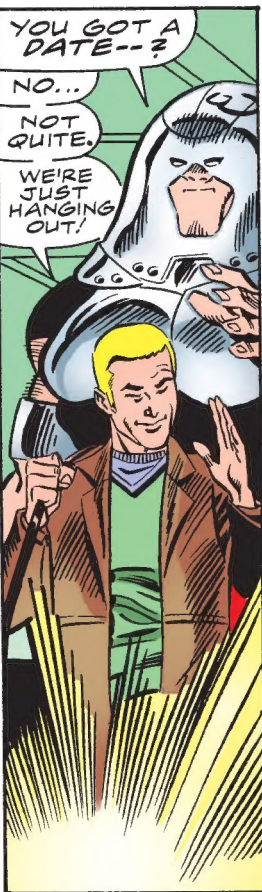


CAN'T!

A FRIEND PUT THE ARM ON ME FOR SOME VOLUNTEER WORK.

THUNDER-STRIKE!

A FEMALE FRIEND?

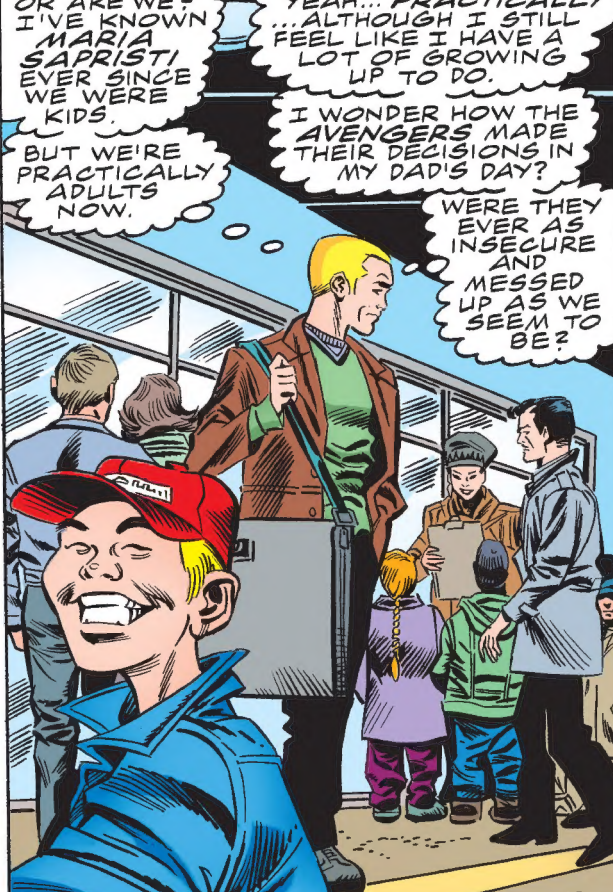


YOU GOT A DATE--?

NO...

NOT QUITE.

WE'RE JUST HANGING OUT!



OR ARE WE? I'VE KNOWN MARIA SAPRISI EVER SINCE WE WERE KIDS.

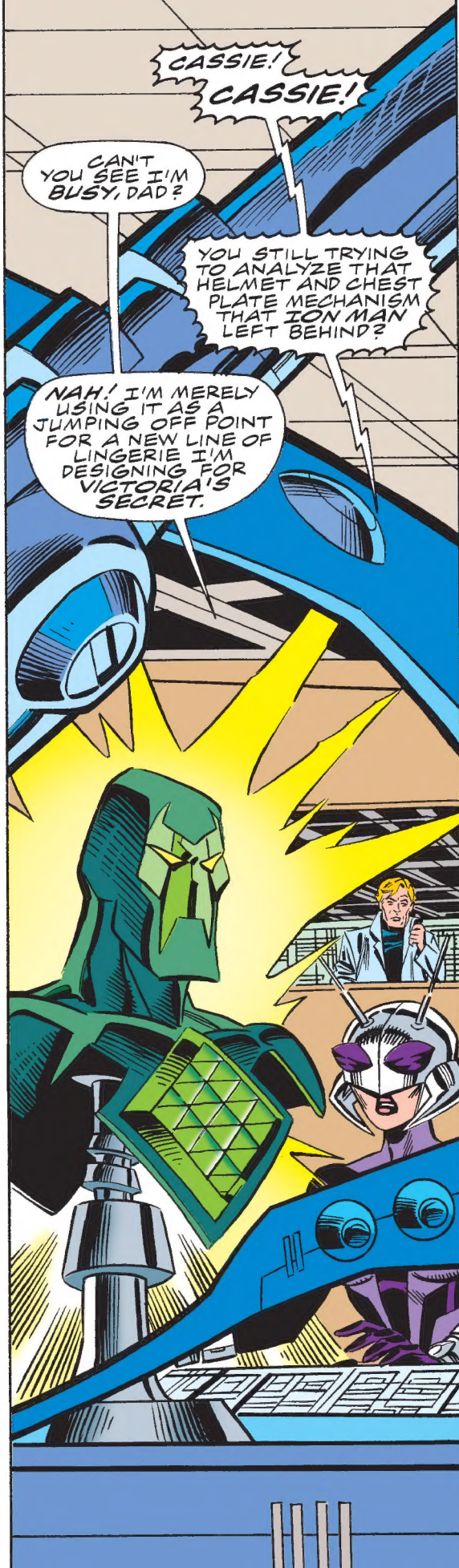
BUT WE'RE PRACTICALLY ADULTS NOW.

YEAH... PRACTICALLY ...ALTHOUGH I STILL FEEL LIKE I HAVE A LOT OF GROWING UP TO DO.

I WONDER HOW THE AVENGERS MADE THEIR DECISIONS IN MY DAD'S DAY?

WERE THEY EVER AS INSECURE AND MESSED UP AS WE SEEM TO BE?



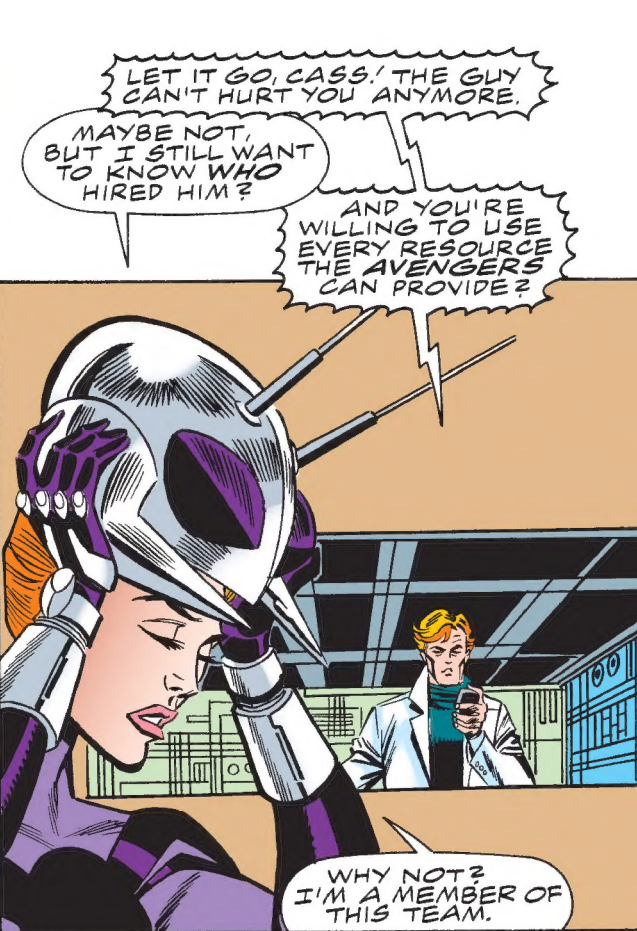


CASSIE!  
CASSIE!

CAN'T  
YOU SEE I'M  
BUSY, DAD?

YOU STILL TRYING  
TO ANALYZE THAT  
HELMET AND CHEST  
PLATE MECHANISM  
THAT ION MAN  
LEFT BEHIND?

NAH! I'M MERELY  
USING IT AS A  
JUMPING OFF POINT  
FOR A NEW LINE OF  
LINGERIE I'M  
DESIGNING FOR  
VICTORIA'S  
SECRET.

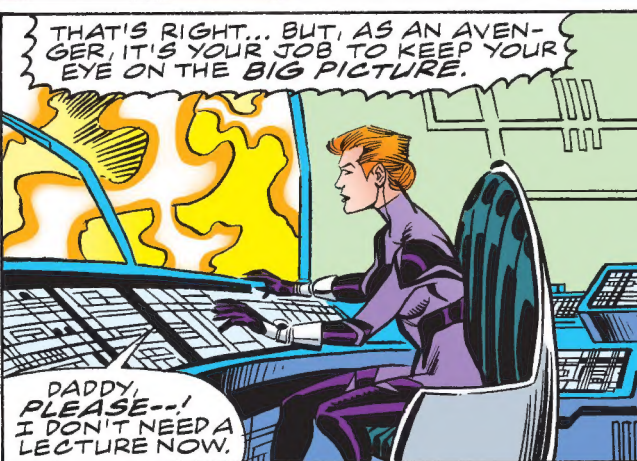


LET IT GO, CASS! THE GUY  
CAN'T HURT YOU ANYMORE.

MAYBE NOT,  
BUT I STILL WANT  
TO KNOW WHO  
HIRED HIM?

AND YOU'RE  
WILLING TO USE  
EVERY RESOURCE  
THE AVENGERS  
CAN PROVIDE?

WHY NOT?  
I'M A MEMBER OF  
THIS TEAM.



THAT'S RIGHT... BUT, AS AN AVEN-  
GER, IT'S YOUR JOB TO KEEP YOUR  
EYE ON THE BIG PICTURE.

DADDY,  
PLEASE---!  
I DON'T NEED A  
LECTURE NOW.



I KNOW  
WHAT I'M  
DOING.

THE MASTERMIND  
BEHIND ION MAN COULD  
BE A THREAT TO  
THE ENTIRE TEAM,  
AND-- OH!

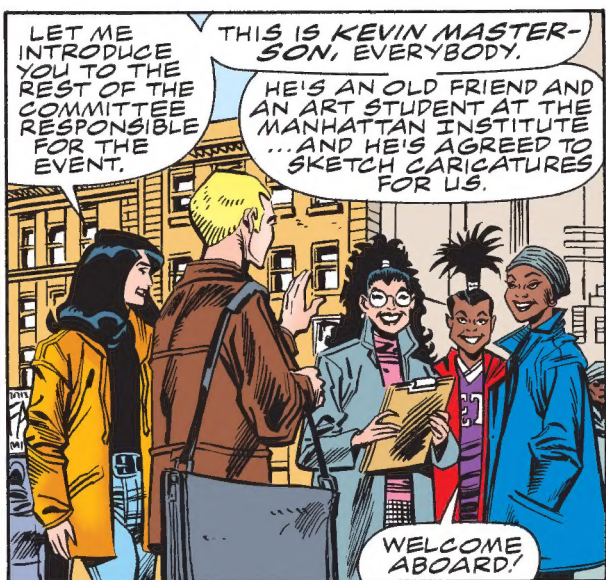
COULD  
YOU BE  
ANY LESS  
SUBTLE?!





THANKS FOR COMING, KEVIN.

MY PLEASURE, MARIA.



LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO THE REST OF THE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EVENT.

THIS IS KEVIN MASTER-SON, EVERYBODY.

HE'S AN OLD FRIEND AND AN ART STUDENT AT THE MANHATTAN INSTITUTE ...AND HE'S AGREED TO SKETCH CARICATURES FOR US.

WELCOME ABOARD!



MARIA NEVER TOLD ME YOU WERE SUCH A CUTIE! I'M HOLLY HALPERN.

MY NAME'S JAMEESIA GRANT, AND I'D LOVVVVE TO POSE FOR YOU.

I'M KENDRA FREEMAN, AND I'D ADVISE YOU TO IGNORE THESE FLIRTS.



YOUR FRIENDS SEEM NICE.

WEIRD, BUT NICE.

I'M REALLY GLAD TO HAVE THIS TIME WITH YOU, KEY.

YOU NEVER SEEM TO BE AROUND ANYMORE.

MY SCHEDULE'S BEEN RATHER HECTIC LATELY...



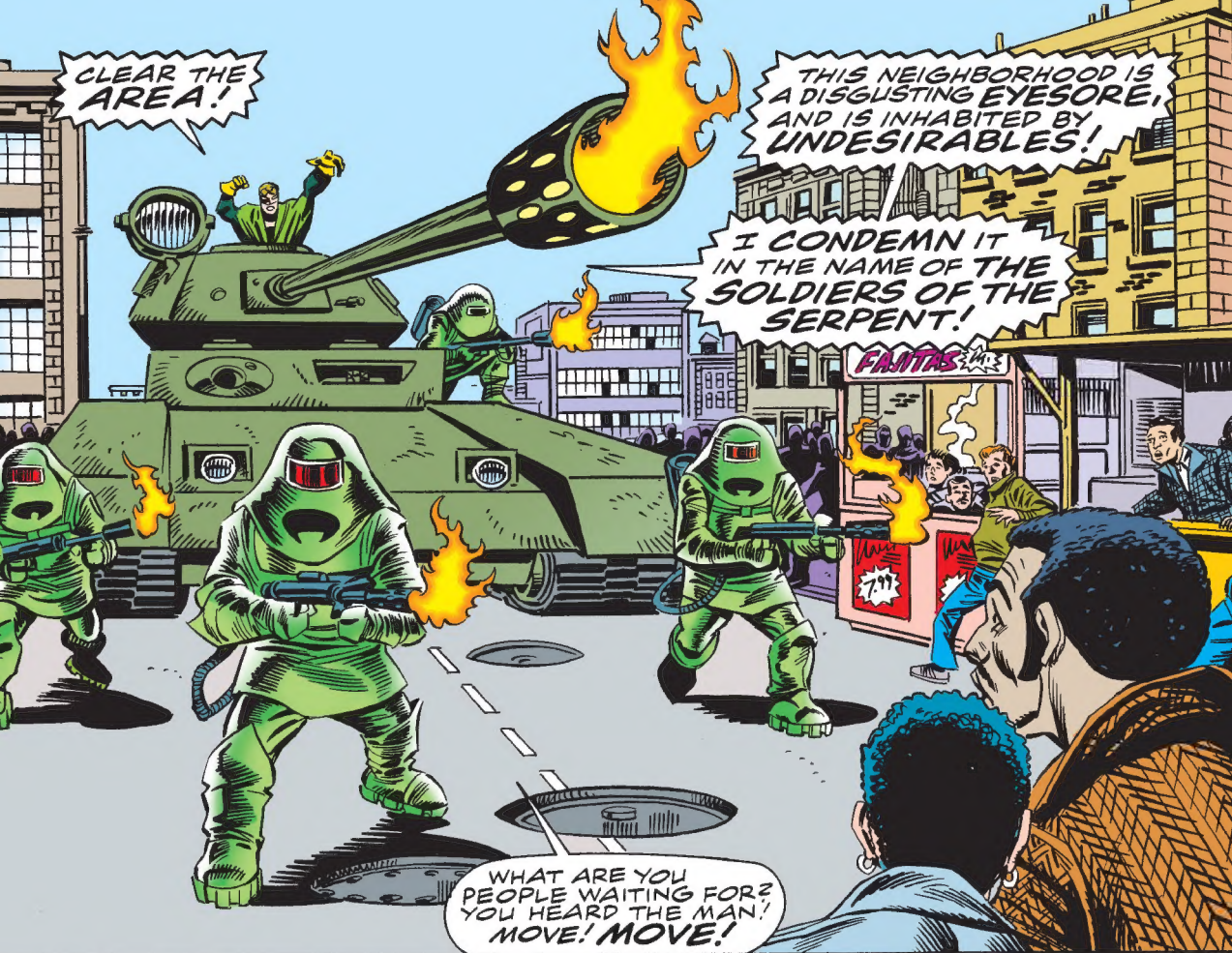
YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY WORKING MUCH TOO HARD. YOU NEED AN OCCASIONAL DAY LIKE THIS TO CHILL OUT, AND--

W-WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?!

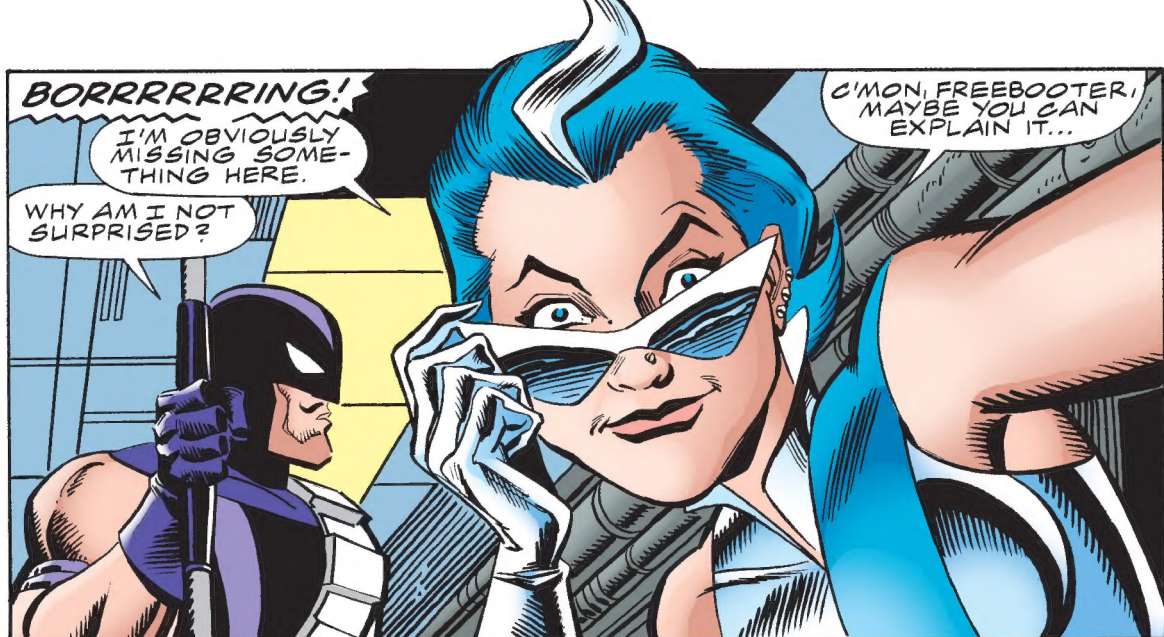
TROUBLE!

REALLY BIG TROUBLE!









**BORRRRRRING!**

I'M OBVIOUSLY MISSING SOMETHING HERE.

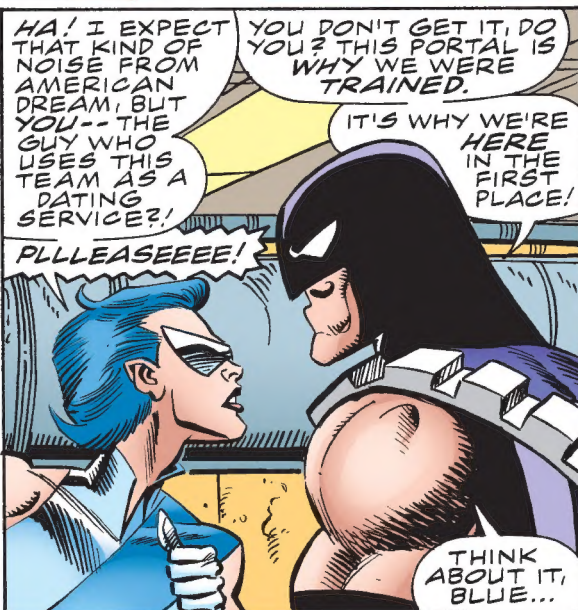
WHY AM I NOT SURPRISED?

C'MON, FREEBOOTER, MAYBE YOU CAN EXPLAIN IT...



I MEAN, LIKE SOMEONE PUTS A STUPID PORTHOLE ON A WALL, AND EVERYBODY SUDDENLY STARTS HITTING THE ANGST CHORD.

AWWWW, BLUE-STREAK... YOU SHOULD AT LEAST TRY TO ACT LIKE AN AVENGER EVERY ONCE IN AWHILE.



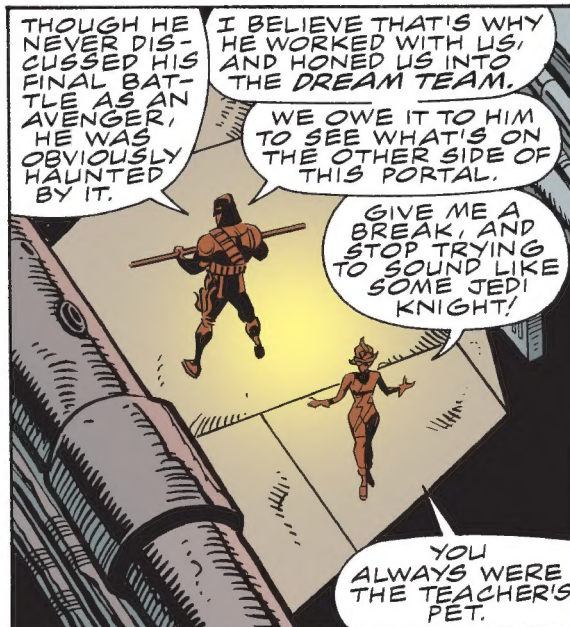
HA! I EXPECT THAT KIND OF NOISE FROM AMERICAN DREAM, BUT YOU-- THE GUY WHO USES THIS TEAM AS A DATING SERVICE?!

YOU DON'T GET IT, DO YOU? THIS PORTAL IS WHY WE WERE TRAINED.

IT'S WHY WE'RE HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE!

PLLEASEEEEE!

THINK ABOUT IT, BLUE...



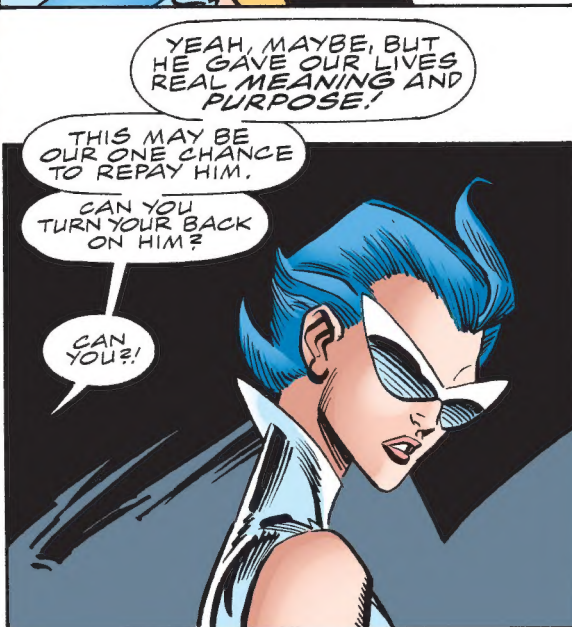
THOUGH HE NEVER DISCUSSED HIS FINAL BATTLE AS AN AVENGER, HE WAS OBVIOUSLY HAUNTED BY IT.

I BELIEVE THAT'S WHY HE WORKED WITH US, AND HONED US INTO THE DREAM TEAM.

WE OWE IT TO HIM TO SEE WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS PORTAL.

GIVE ME A BREAK, AND STOP TRYING TO SOUND LIKE SOME JEDI KNIGHT!

YOU ALWAYS WERE THE TEACHER'S PET.



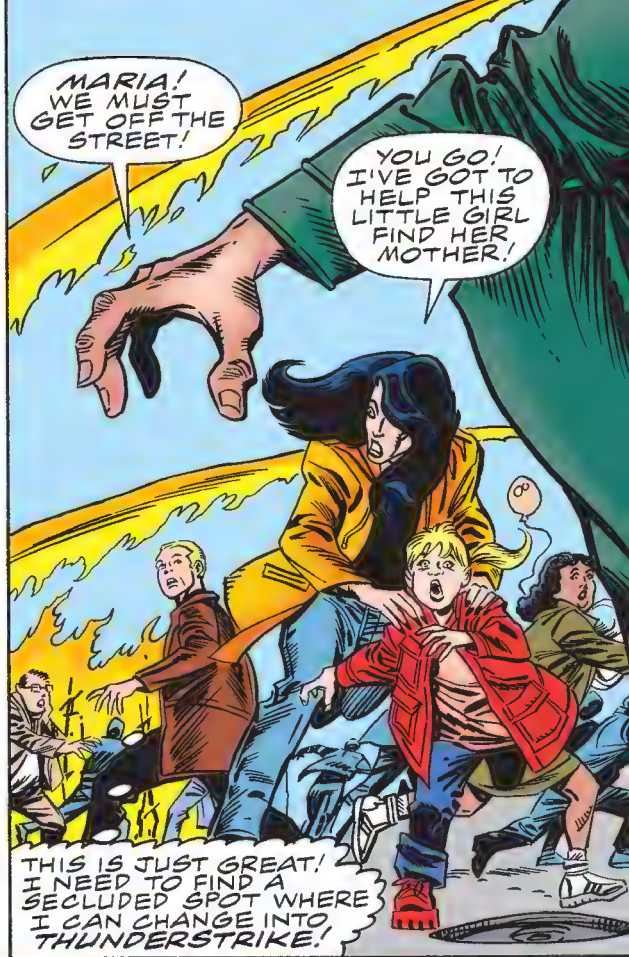
YEAH, MAYBE, BUT HE GAVE OUR LIVES REAL MEANING AND PURPOSE!

THIS MAY BE OUR ONE CHANCE TO REPAY HIM.

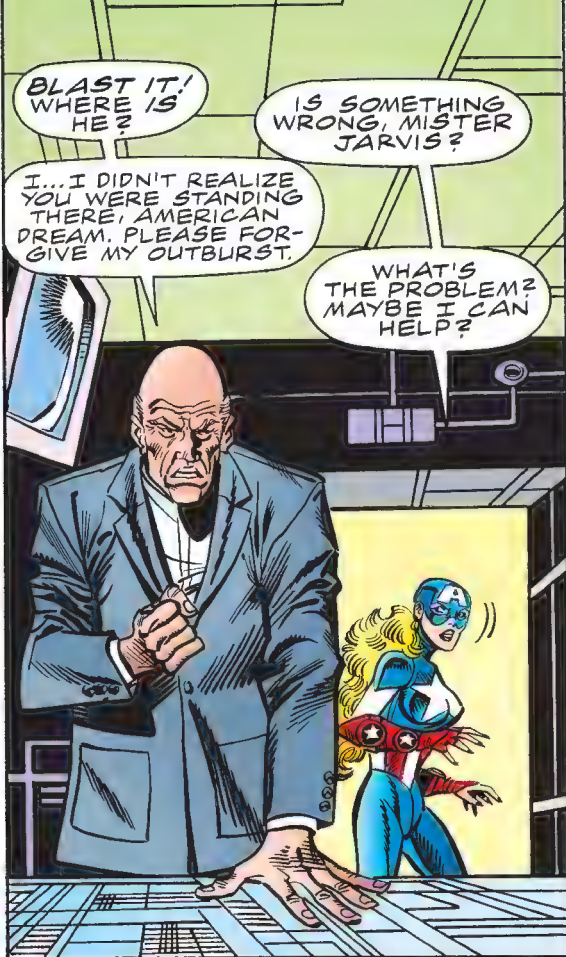
CAN YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON HIM?

CAN YOU?!







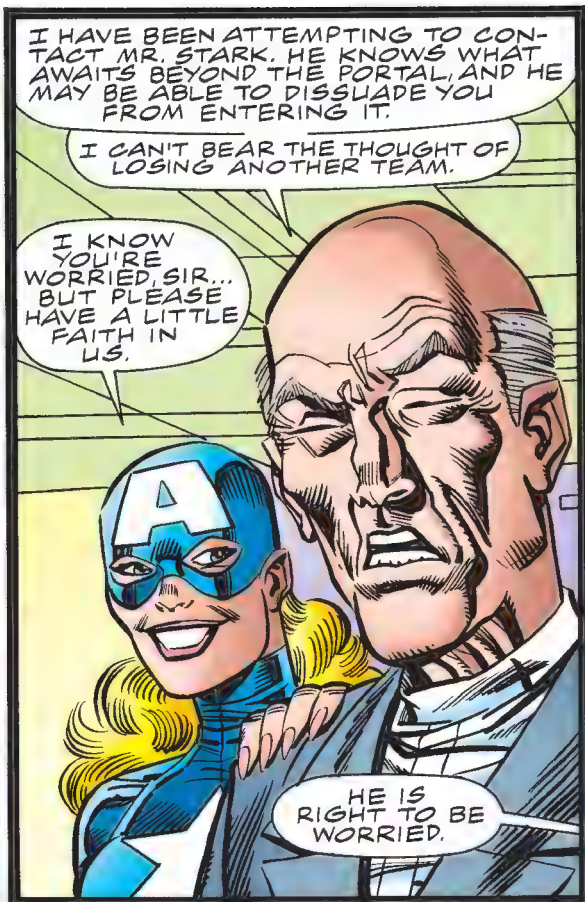


BLAST IT!  
WHERE IS  
HE?

IS SOMETHING  
WRONG, MISTER  
JARVIS?

I... I DIDN'T REALIZE  
YOU WERE STANDING  
THERE, AMERICAN  
DREAM. PLEASE FOR-  
GIVE MY OUTBURST.

WHAT'S  
THE PROBLEM?  
MAYBE I CAN  
HELP?

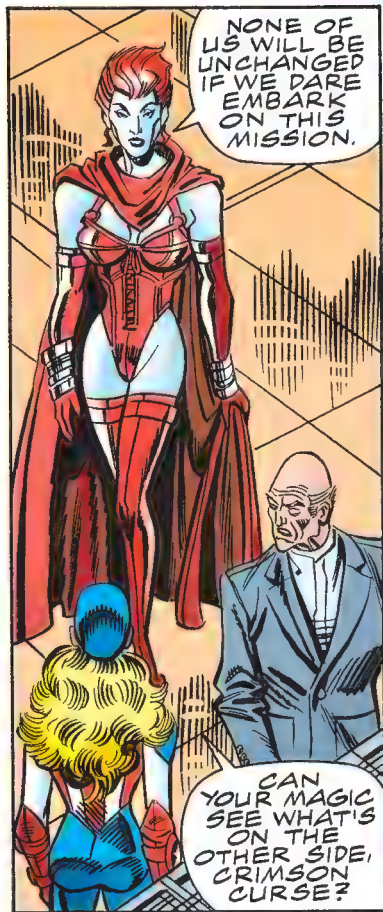


I HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO  
CONTACT MR. STARK. HE KNOWS WHAT  
AWAITS BEYOND THE PORTAL, AND HE  
MAY BE ABLE TO DISSUADE YOU  
FROM ENTERING IT.

I CAN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF  
LOSING ANOTHER TEAM.

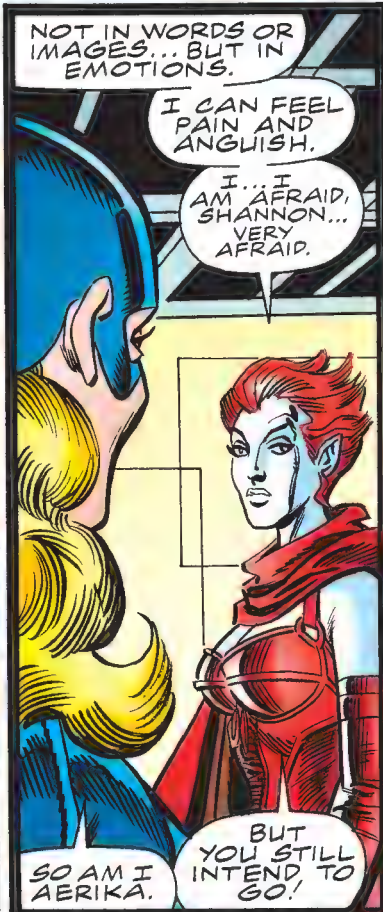
I KNOW  
YOU'RE  
WORRIED, SIR...  
BUT PLEASE  
HAVE A LITTLE  
FAITH IN  
US.

HE IS  
RIGHT TO BE  
WORRIED.



NONE OF  
US WILL BE  
UNCHANGED  
IF WE DARE  
EMBARK  
ON THIS  
MISSION.

CAN  
YOUR MAGIC  
SEE WHAT'S  
ON THE  
OTHER SIDE,  
CRIMSON  
CURSE?



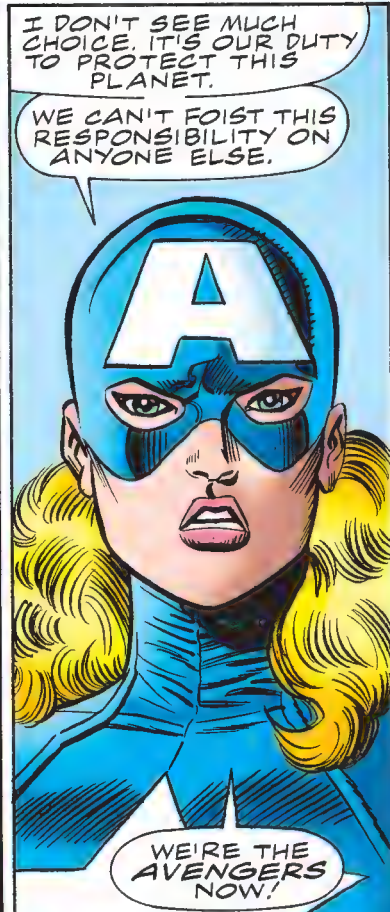
NOT IN WORDS OR  
IMAGES... BUT IN  
EMOTIONS.

I CAN FEEL  
PAIN AND  
ANGUISH.

I... I  
AM AFRAID,  
SHANNON...  
VERY  
AFRAID.

SO AM I  
AERIKA.

BUT  
YOU STILL  
INTEND TO  
GO!

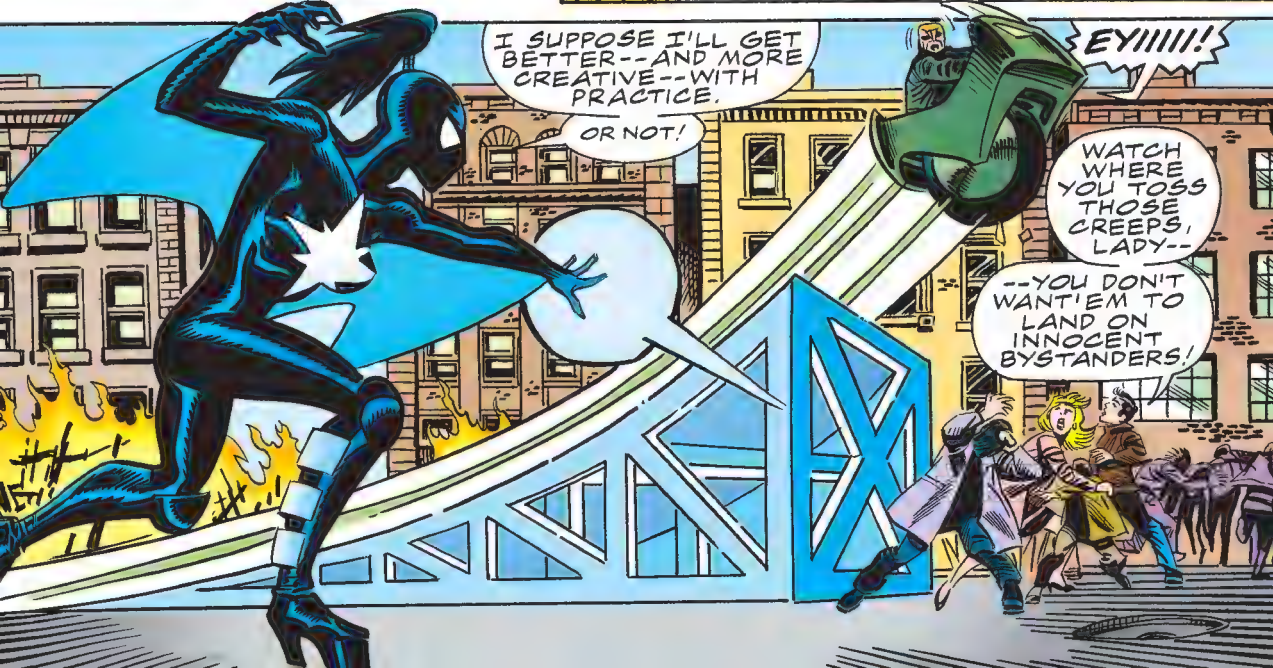
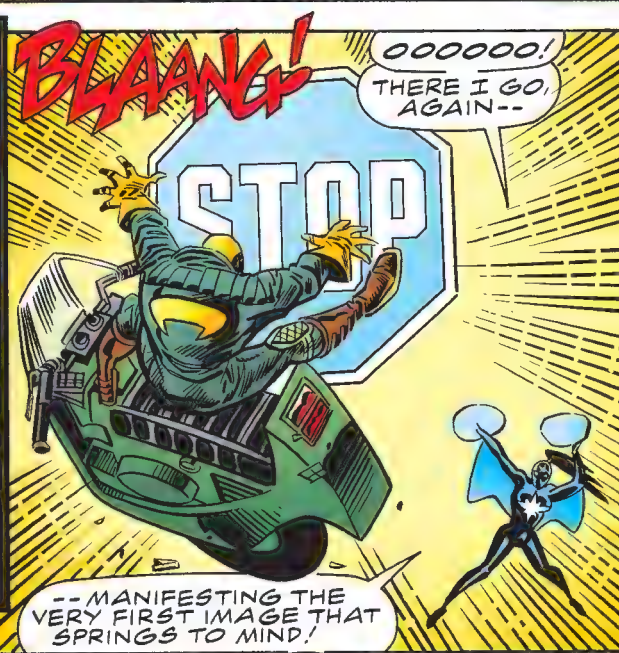
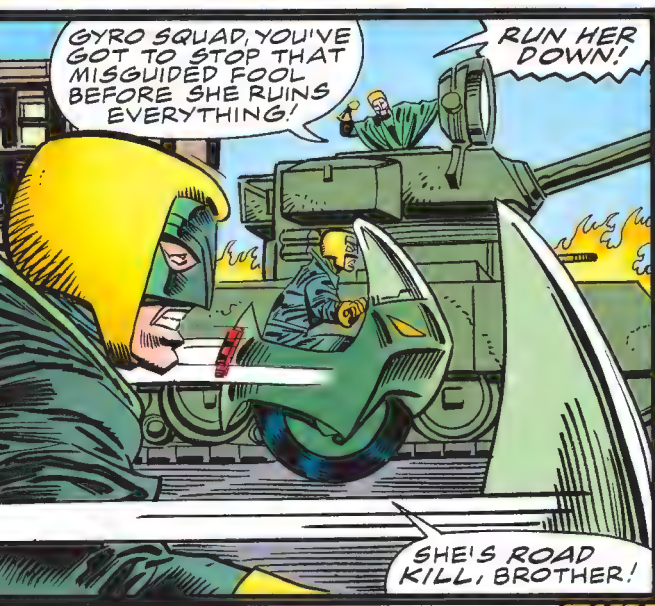
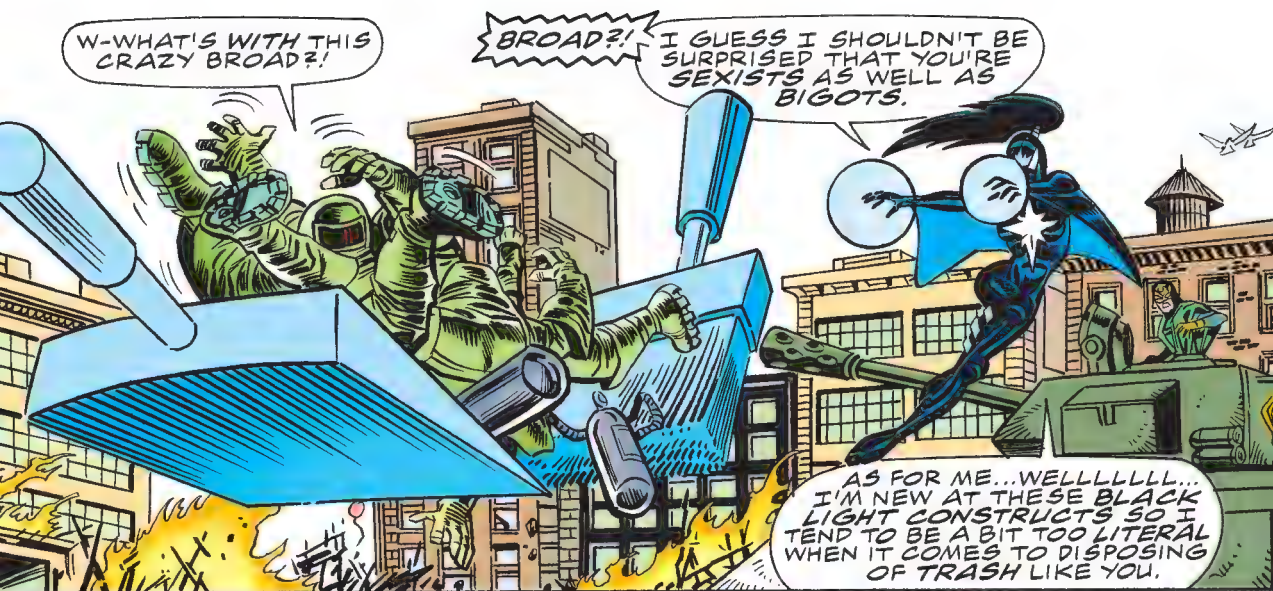


I DON'T SEE MUCH  
CHOICE. IT'S OUR DUTY  
TO PROTECT THIS  
PLANET.

WE CAN'T FOIST THIS  
RESPONSIBILITY ON  
ANYONE ELSE.

WE'RE THE  
AVENGERS  
NOW!



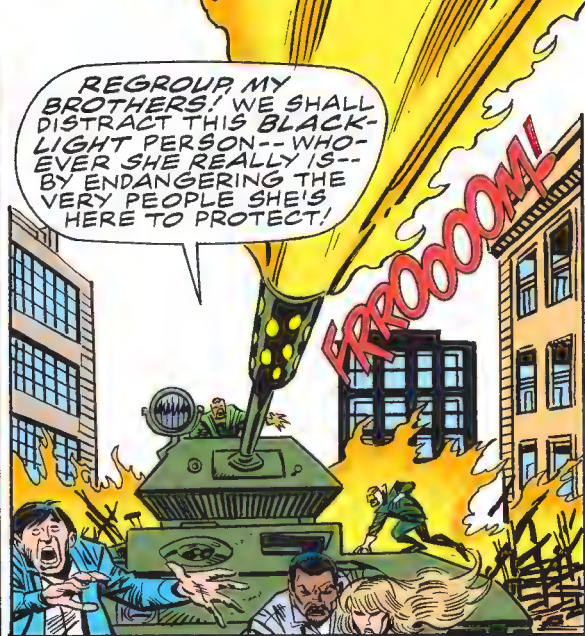






DON'T WORRY! BASED ON HIS CURRENT TRAJECTORY, HE'S GOING TO HAVE A BIG REUNION WITH HIS BIGOT BUDDIES.

THIS LADY IS GOOD-- REAL GOOD-- BUT SHE'D BETTER NOT UNDERESTIMATE THESE SERPENTS!



REGROUP MY BROTHERS! WE SHALL DISTRACT THIS BLACK-LIGHT PERSON-- WHO-EVER SHE REALLY IS-- BY ENDANGERING THE VERY PEOPLE SHE'S HERE TO PROTECT!



M-MY GOD--!

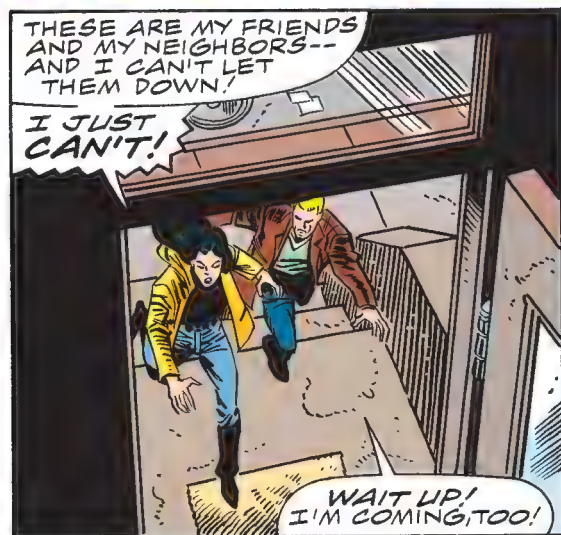


T-THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THAT BUILDING!



WHOA, MARIA! WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

THIS IS MY NEIGHBORHOOD, KEVIN! I HELPED ORGANIZE THIS STREET FAIR-- AND THAT MEANS I'M PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR WHATEVER HAPPENS HERE!



THESE ARE MY FRIENDS AND MY NEIGHBORS-- AND I CAN'T LET THEM DOWN!

I JUST CAN'T!

WAIT UP! I'M COMING, TOO!





**BEEP! BOOP! BIP! BWEEP!**

HI, MAINFRAME!

HOW DID YOU--?

HA! ADULTS  
NEVER THINK KIDS  
ARE PAYING  
ATTENTION!

WHY ARE YOU  
WASTING TIME WITH  
THAT STUPID GAME  
WHEN YOU SHOULD  
BE THINKING ABOUT  
THE VOTE?

I ALREADY KNOW HOW I'M VOTING  
...THANKS TO THIS GAME.

IT'S ONE OF THOSE FIRST PER-  
SON SHOOTERS... WHERE YOU  
HUNT FOR ENEMIES, TRYING TO  
DESTROY THEM BEFORE THEY  
ATTACK YOU.

CARE TO  
JOIN ME? IT  
KIND'A PUTS  
THINGS IN  
PERSPECTIVE,  
AND YOU'LL  
PROBABLY BE  
TERRIFIC  
AT IT.

IS THAT YOUR  
IDEA OF A JOKE?

OHhhh! SO THAT'S  
WHAT'S BUMMING YOU!  
YOU'RE AFRAID WE'LL  
STICK IT TO YOU  
BECAUSE YOU'RE  
ARTIFICIAL.

WHY  
SHOULD  
WE?

WON'T YOU?

WAY I SEE IT, NOW  
THAT WE'VE LEARNED  
WHY YOU'VE BEEN  
ACTING SO SQUIRRELLY,  
EVERYBODY CAN RELAX  
AROUND YOU.

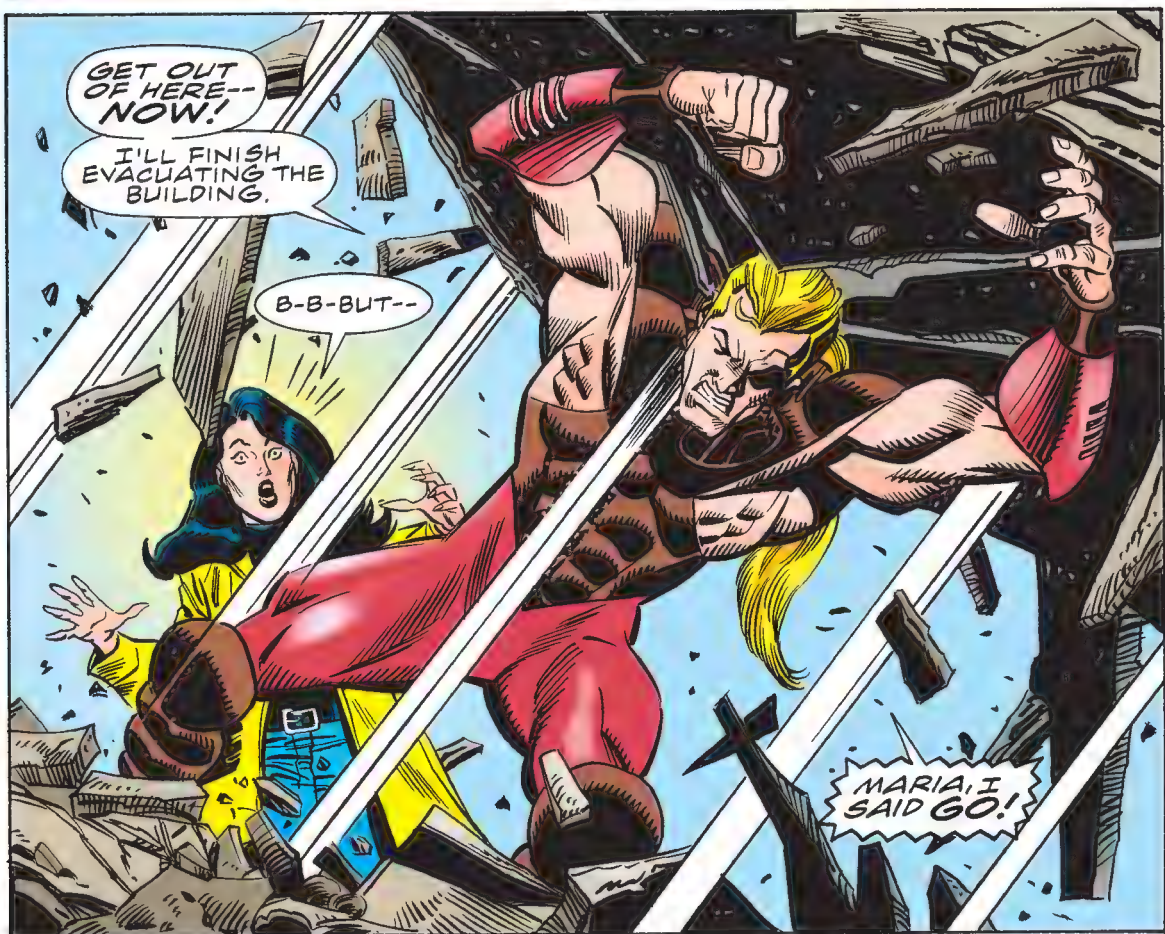
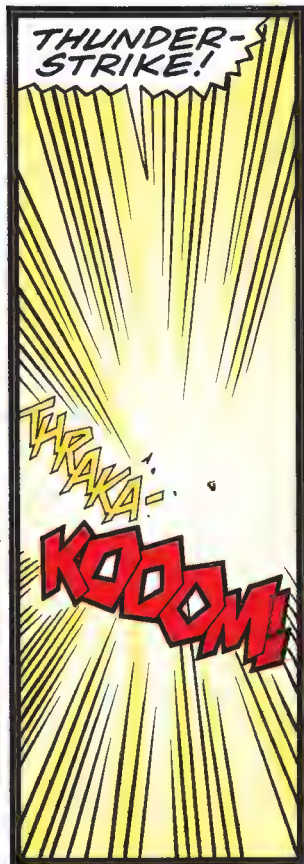
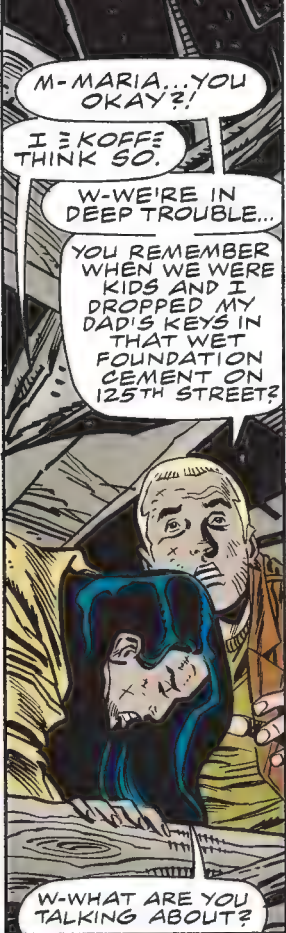
IT'S NO BIG DEAL  
THAT YOU'RE  
DIFFERENT...

HECK, WE'RE ALL DIFF-  
FERENT IN ONE WAY  
OR ANOTHER.

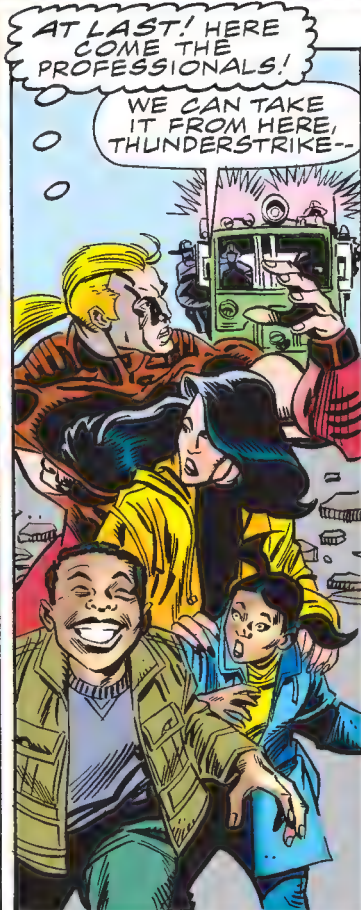
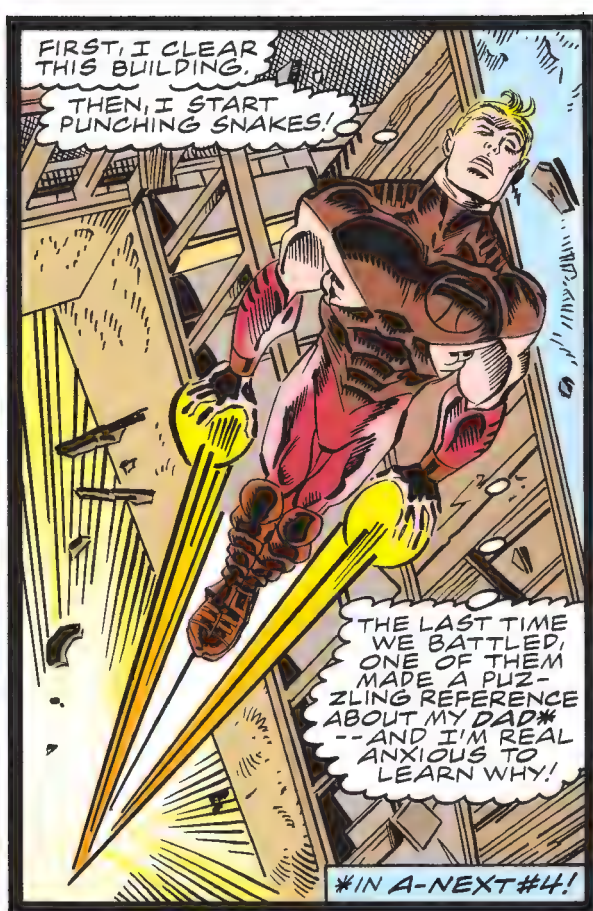
WE COULDN'T BE AVEN-  
GERS IF WE WEREN'T.

YOU STILL CONSIDER  
YOURSELF AN  
AVENGER...  
DON'T  
YOU?!

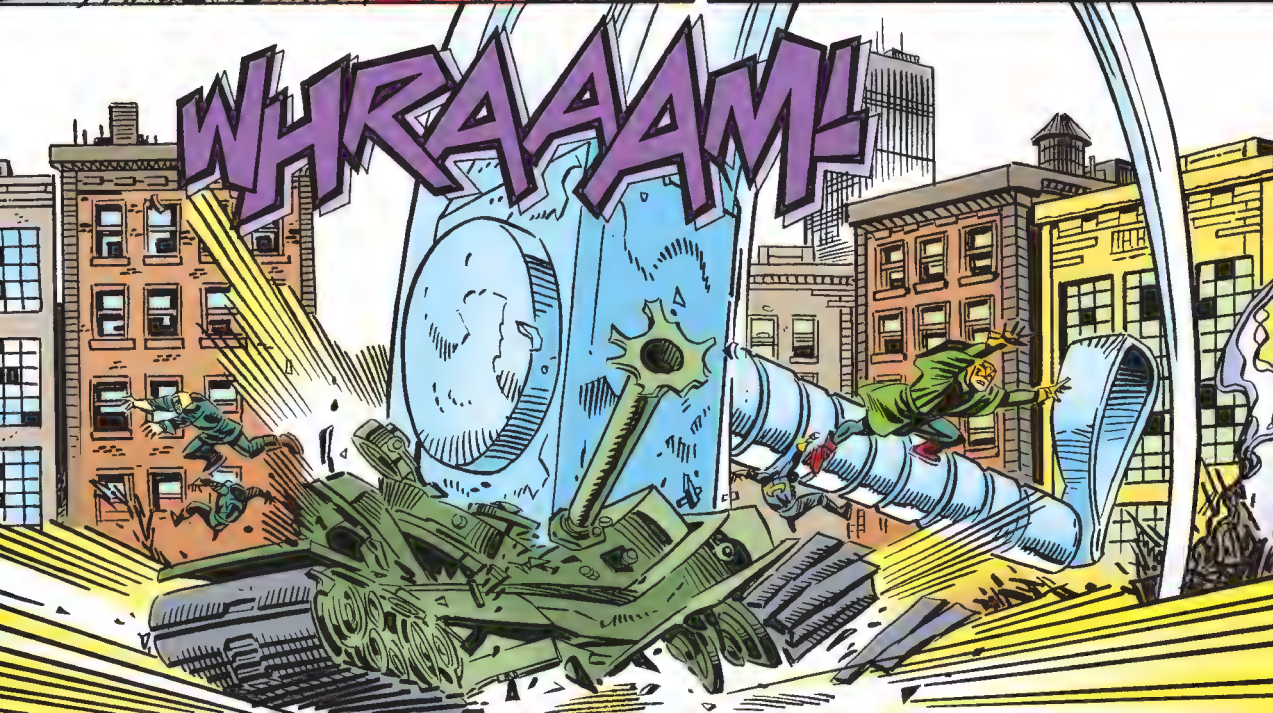
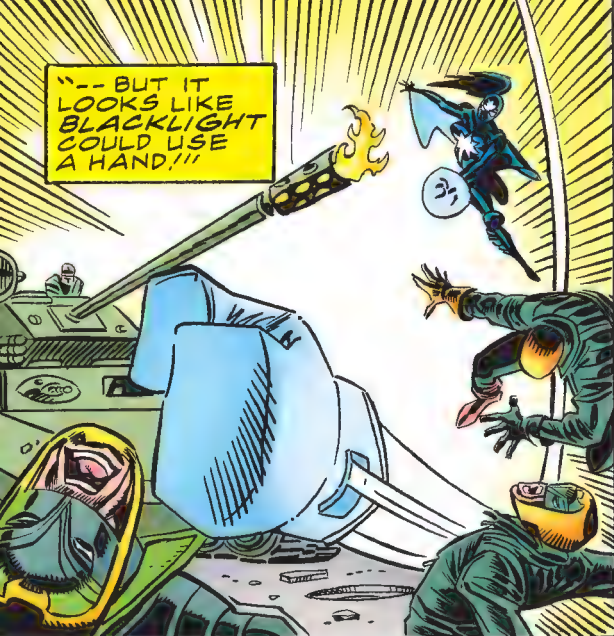
















THAT WAS TOO COOL!

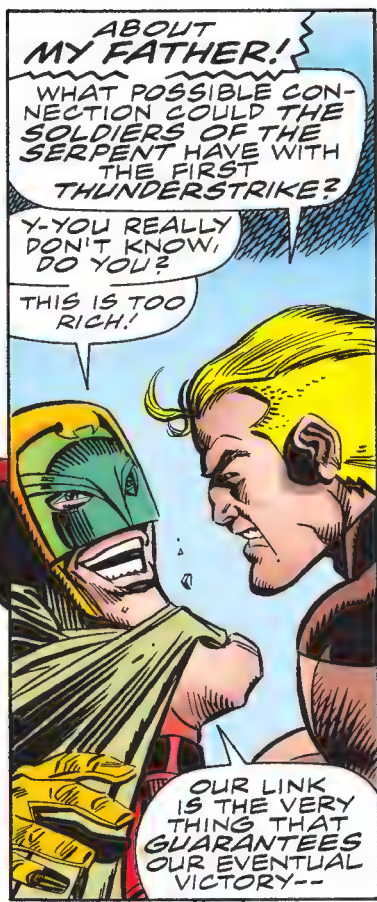
OKAY, SERPENT GUY, SINCE YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WAS SHOUTING ALL THE ORDERS, I THINK WE SHOULD HAVE A LITTLE CHAT...



ABOUT YOUR SICK-O AGENDA!

ABOUT YOUR LOUSY WARDROBE!

BUT, MOSTLY...



ABOUT MY FATHER!

WHAT POSSIBLE CONNECTION COULD THE SOLDIERS OF THE SERPENT HAVE WITH THE FIRST THUNDERSTRIKE?

Y-YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW, DO YOU?

THIS IS TOO RICH!

OUR LINK IS THE VERY THING THAT GUARANTEES OUR EVENTUAL VICTORY--



--AND ASSURES YOUR TOTAL DEFEAT!

STOP PLAYING WORD GAMES, AND TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!

TELL ME!

WITH PLEASURE! THE BOND WE SHARE WITH YOUR FATHER IS--



SHKOW!



W-WHERE DID THAT BLAST COME FROM--?!

I...I'M NOT SURE.

BUT I DOUBT IT WAS HEAVEN.



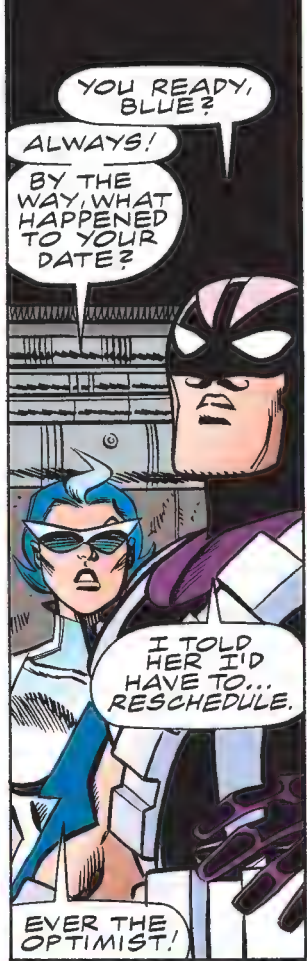


IT'S TIME, CASS.

PLEASE DON'T FEEL COMPELLED TO DO ANYTHING RASH OR STUPID.

DADDY, I...

I LOVE YOU, TOO.



YOU READY, BLUE?

ALWAYS!

BY THE WAY, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR DATE?

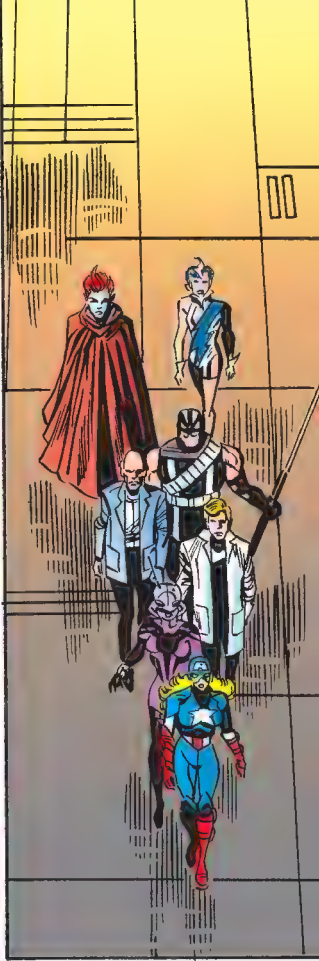
I TOLD HER I'D HAVE TO... RESCHEDULE.

EVER THE OPTIMIST!



W-WE'D BETTER GO.

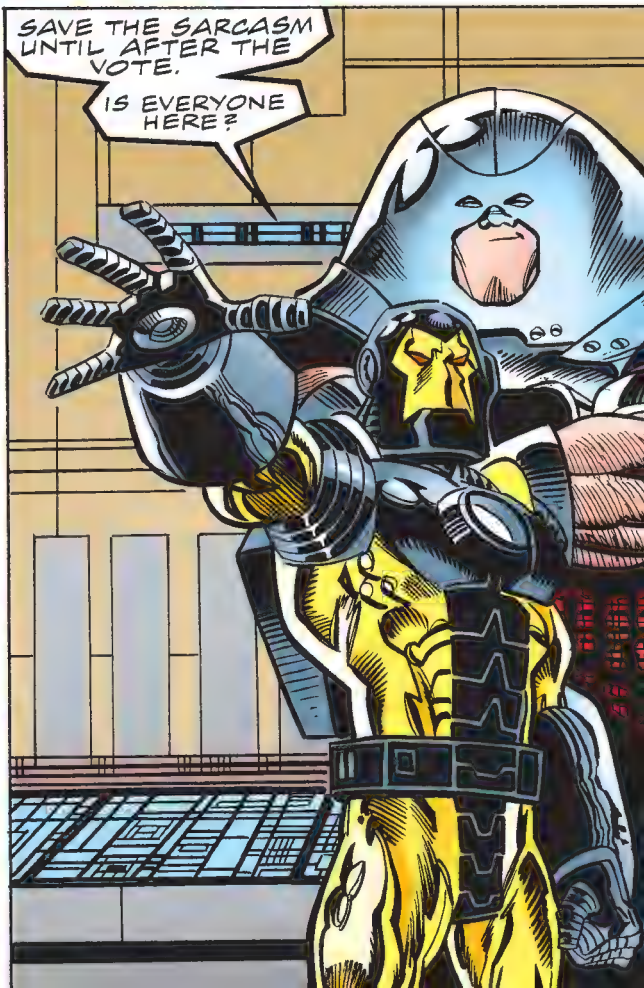
OUR DESTINY AWAITS, MY FRIEND.



NO SENSE PUTTING THIS OFF ANY LONGER.

WE HAVE A DECISION TO MAKE-- PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE WE HAVE FACED SINCE WE SIGNED ON AS AVENGERS.

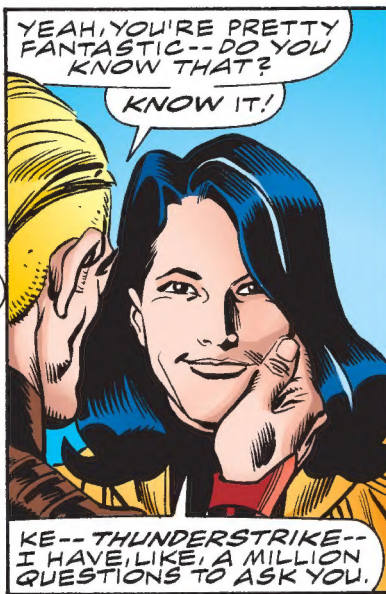
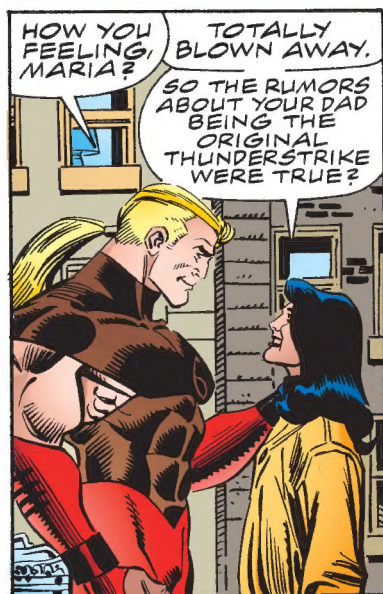
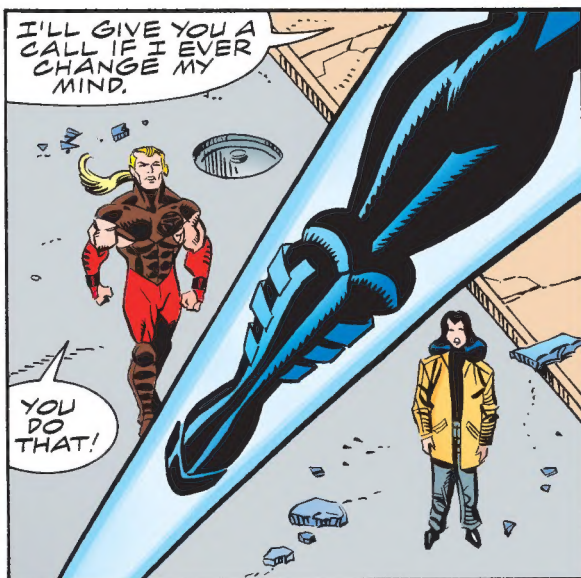
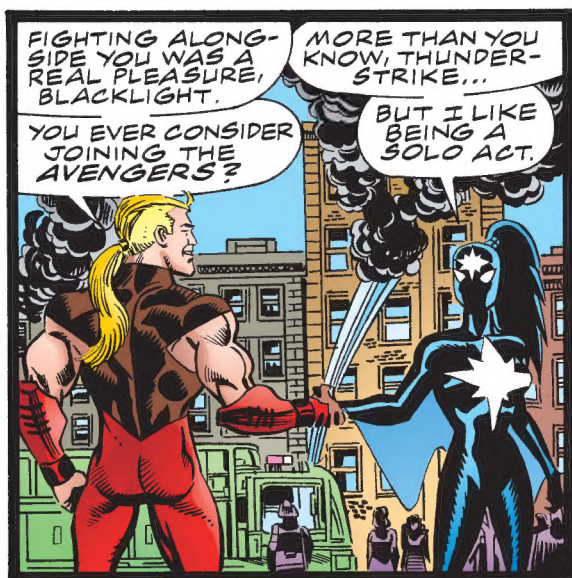
DID YOU SAY "WE"---?



SAVE THE SARCASM UNTIL AFTER THE VOTE.

IS EVERYONE HERE?







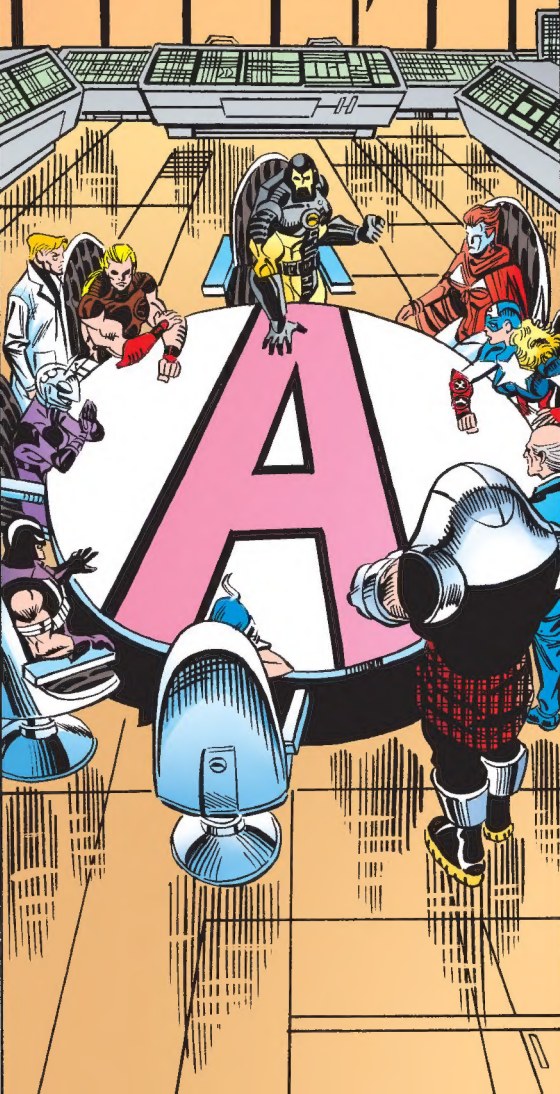


WE DO NOT KNOW  
WHAT AWAITS BEYOND  
THE PORTAL.

IT COULD LEAD TO A  
MENACE THAT ONCE  
DWARFED THE POWER  
OF THE ORIGINAL  
AVENGERS.

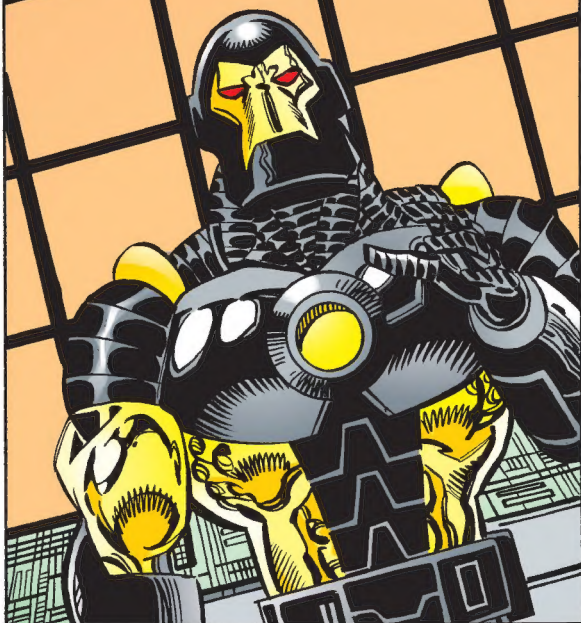
ONE THAT STILL  
POSES A THREAT  
TO OUR ENTIRE  
WORLD.

OR, IT COULD  
SIMPLY DEPOSIT  
US IN THE  
CENTER OF A  
ROARING SUN.



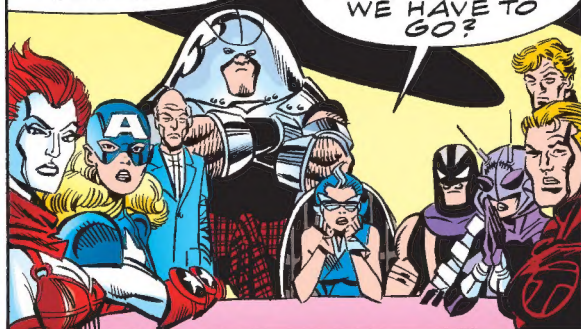
ALL WE KNOW FOR CERTAIN  
IS THAT-- THANKS TO OUR  
EFFORTS-- THE GATEWAY  
IS NOW OPEN.

AND IT SWINGS  
BOTH WAYS!

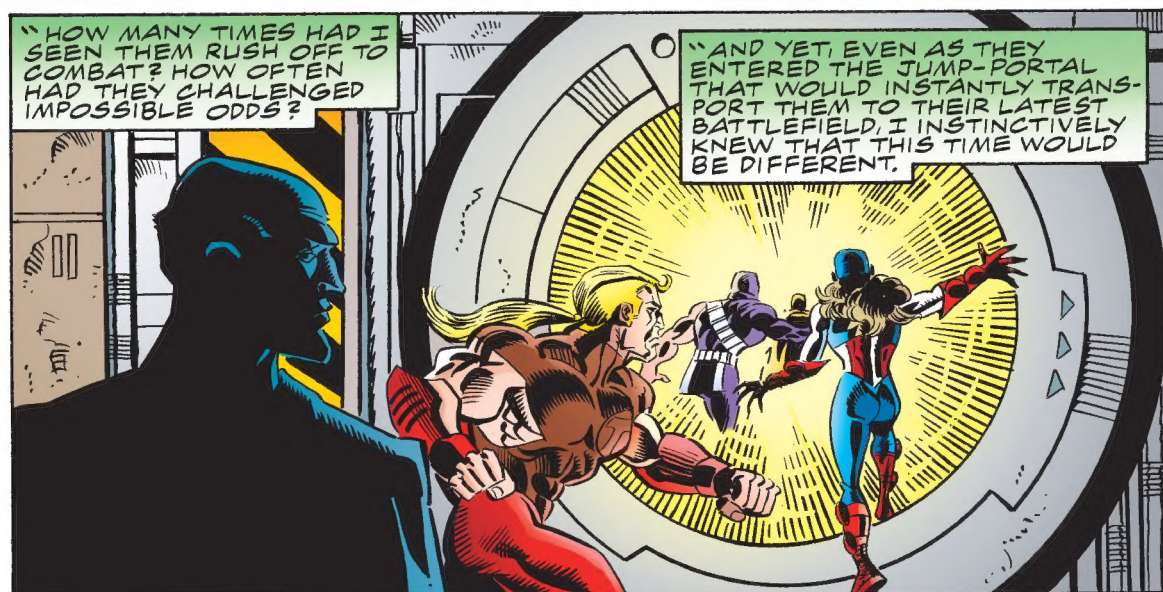
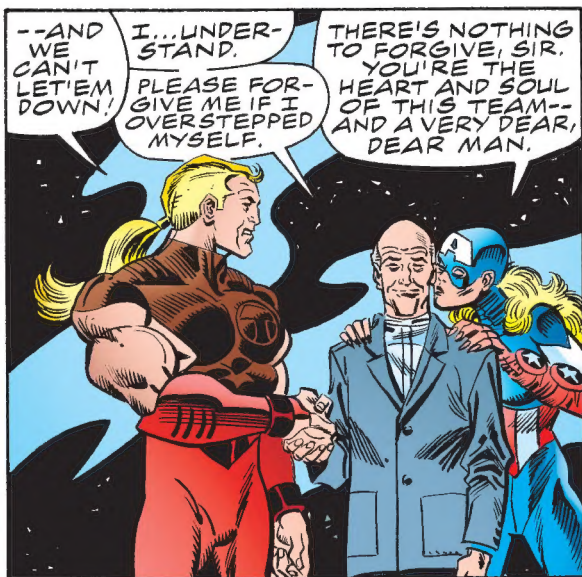


YO, TINHEAD!  
YOU GONNA MILK  
THIS DRAMA  
FOREVER--

--OR CAN WE  
JUST CUT TO THE  
PART WHERE WE  
ALL AGREE THAT  
WE HAVE TO  
GO?







NEXT ISSUE: **RAGNAROK!** 'WUFF SAID!





*Shadowcat*

